



# THE RAPPAHANNOCK GAZETTE



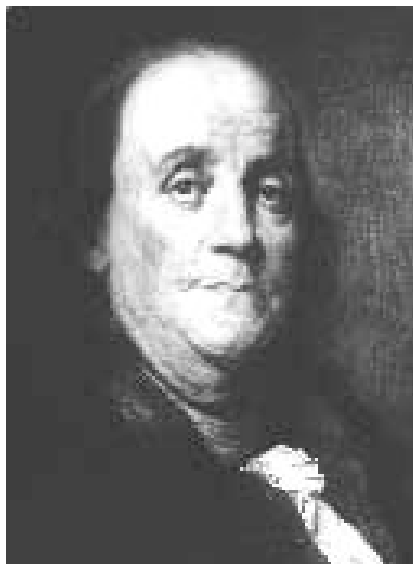
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*Newsletter of Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society, Inc.*

*Volume 3 Number 4*

*July/August 2000*

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Benjamin Franklin, First Postmaster General

## UNITED STATES POSTAL SYSTEMS 1775-1830

On July 26, 1775, members of the Second Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, agreed "...that a Postmaster General be appointed for the United States, who shall hold his office at Philadelphia, and shall be allowed a salary of 1,000 dollars per annum..."

That simple statement signaled the birth of the Post Office Department, the predecessor of the United States Postal Service and the second oldest department or agency of the present United States of America.

### *COLONIAL TIMES*

In early colonial times, correspondents depended on friends, merchants, and Native Americans to carry messages between the colonies. However, most correspondence ran between the colonists and England, their mother country. It was largely to handle this mail that, in 1639, the first official notice of a postal service in the colonies appeared. The General Court of Massachusetts designated Richard Fairbanks' tavern in Boston as the official repository of mail brought from or sent overseas, in line with the practice in England and other nations to use coffee houses and taverns as mail drops.

Local authorities operated post routes within the colonies. Then, in 1673, Governor Francis Lovelace of New York set up a monthly post between New York and Boston. The service was of short duration, but the post rider's trail became known as the Old Boston Post Road, part of today's US Route 1.

(con't on page 3)

*The purpose of the Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society is to bring together persons interested in preserving & perpetuating the heritage and culture of the colonial era in & around the Rappahannock River Valley of Virginia; to conduct historical research of persons, places & events relating to the Rappahannock River Valley in Colonial times, and to organize activities related to the Colonial era in an effort to educate the public about the way of life of our forebears in this area.*

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## 2000 RCHS OFFICERS

**President:** Diane Nolan  
*Diane344nolan@aol.com*

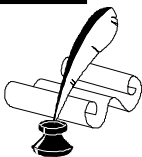
**Vice-President:** Al Piercey  
*pierceyunderthehill@yahoo.com*

**Secretary:** Trip Wiggins  
*TripWig@aol.com*

**Treasurer:** Myra Wiggins  
*MyraWig@aol.com*

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## THE PRESIDENT'S PEN



The Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society has eagerly participated in a variety of activities on both ends of the education spectrum this summer.

In July the dance team proudly supported the Independence Day Celebration in historic Port Royal. Beginning with the reading of the Declaration of Independence on the church steps to dancing in the street.

Next, the dance team presented a program for the Sounds of Summer series at the Smoot Library in King George. The presentation was sponsored by Pern's Supermarket and the Union Bank & Trust (King George office). The audience enjoyed vignettes by first person interpreters of the Washington family, dance and step demonstrations, a discussion of colonial attire for the different economic classes and a discussion of manners and verbage of the time.

The following day, several members traveled to Dumfries with dance instructor, Elaine Sturgeon, to teach colonial dancing to the children attending the first annual Colonial Day Camp at the Weems-Botts Museum.

Finally, a small group took advantage of an opportunity to increase their own education and sharpen their skills by attending an excellent workshop on Gentry/Commoner Interaction: Etiquette in the 18th Century sponsored by the Living History Foundation in Fairfax.

The tax exempt paperwork has been completed and submitted for approval. Our heartfelt thanks to our treasurer, Myra Wiggins for all the work and long hours that she put into

making this dream a reality for this Society. This group is not even a year old and it is amazing to all of us how far we have come. The credit goes entirely to those members who have given so much time and energy in support of the goals and objectives of this group.

We have a busy schedule for the rest of the year and if you have not been a part of the action, come on...join in.

*Diane*

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## COLONIAL FREDERICKSBURG FACTS

**Aug 13, 1728** George Home, made 1<sup>st</sup> survey of Fredericksburg and lays out original 64 lots.

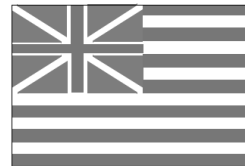
**July 12, 1749** The Virginia Governor's Council approves claims to establish the Ohio Company and the Loyal Company—two land companies with title to over 1.3 million acres in “western Virginia” (modern WV, KY, OH). The Ohio Co. was made up of powerful Northern Neck People (Fairfax, Lawrence Washington, Thomas Carlyle, etc) while the Loyal Co. was made up of Tidewater and Piedmont families including the Lewises, Meriwethers, and several from the local area—Charles Dick, Francis and John Thornton, among them).

**Oct 1750** Fielding Lewis' store was robbed of “sundry pieces of gold and silver coin amounting to one hundred pounds”. That's a lot of money to have in the till in 1750!



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## AMERICAN HISTORY TIDBITS

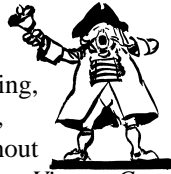


**1715** - 1st theater in colonies built in Williamsburg, VA, by William Livingston.

**1719** - Probable date of the 1st publication of gay and nonsensical Mother Goose's Melodies for Children. Printed by Thomas Fleet in Boston, an enterprise of some daring in those times of Puritan severity.

**1747** - Some of the 1st flags created in American colonies were those designed by Benjamin Franklin to be employed by military units opposing attacks by French.

## UPCOMING EVENTS



**Aug 1-31 - Wear What They Wore.** Clothing, from the single thread to the whole garment, is the focus of interpretive programs throughout the month. *Jamestown Settlement & Yorktown Victory Center.*

**Through Sept. 4 - Revealing Fashions.** Exhibit focuses on clothing patterns and construction methods from 1750-1790. Twenty five antique garments shown along with reproductions of the same fabricated by Col. Williamsburg's Costume Design Center & Historic Area Fashion Trades. *DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum.*

**Now through Feb 28, 2001 - Shipbuilding in Colonial Virginia.** Nine-month exhibition traces the shipbuilding industry from the colony's earliest days through the Revolution. Examples of tools used in design & construction exhibited along with paintings, prints, maps etc. *Yorktown Victory Center*

**Aug. 20 - Tobacco Harvest.** Help the farmer clean the leaves & watch how he cuts & splits the stems. Help gather the cut plants & hang them to cure. *Claude Moore Colonial Farm.* Maclean, Va. 1-4pm.

**Aug. 25 - NPS Founder's Day.** National Park Service was created on Aug 25, 1916. *George Washington's Birthplace National Monument (Pope's Creek).* Fee Free Day.

**Aug. 25 - NPS Founder's Day.** 84th Anniversary of founding of National Park Service. *Jamestown & Yorktown.* Fee Free Day.

**Sept. 2 - Drying vegetables.** Help clean, slice, string and hang the family's produce for drying. *Claude Moore Colonial Farm.* Maclean, Va. 1-4pm

**Sept 16-17 - Constitution Day.** Special programs celebrating the birthday of the Constitution. *Montpelier.*

**Sept. 17 - Constitution Commemoration.** The delegates of the Constitutional Convention signed the Constitution on Sept. 17, 1787. Special park ranger programs offered. *George Washington's Birthplace National Monument (Pope's Creek).*

**Oct 7-8 - Fall Fiber Festival & Sheep Dog Trials.** Display, demonstrations & workshops focused on the fiber arts. *Montpelier.*

**Oct. 7 - Straw into Gold: From Flax to Linen.** Transform bundles of dry stalks into gleaming fiber. *Claude Moore Colonial Farm.* 1-4pm

**Oct. 19-21 - What Shall I Wear? Dressing the First Families.** Annual Costume Symposium. *Gadsby's Tavern.*

### WEB SITES FOR ABOVE EVENTS:

Kenmore/Ferry Farm

[www.kenmore.org](http://www.kenmore.org)

George Washington Birthplace National Monument

[www.nps.gov/gewa](http://www.nps.gov/gewa)

Montpelier

[www.montpelier.org](http://www.montpelier.org)

Yorktown/Jamestown

[www.nps.gov/colo](http://www.nps.gov/colo)

Claude Moore Colonial Farm

[www.1771.org](http://www.1771.org)

Jamestown Settlement

[www.historyisfun.org](http://www.historyisfun.org)

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

[www.history.org](http://www.history.org)

## Postal System (con't)

William Penn established Pennsylvania's first post office in 1683. In the South, private messengers, usually slaves, connected the huge plantations; a hogs head of tobacco was the penalty for failing to relay mail to the next plantaion.

Central postal organization came to the colonies only after 1691 when Thomas Neale received a 21-year grant from the British Crown for a North American postal service. Neale never visited America. Instead, he appointed Governor Andrew Hamilton of New Jersey as his Deputy Postmaster General. Neale's franchise cost him only 80 cents a year but was no bargain; he died heavily in debt, in 1699, after assigning his interests in America to Andrew Hamilton and another Englishman, R. West.

In 1707, the British Government bought the rights to the North American postal service from West and the widow of Andrew Hamilton. It then appointed John Hamilton, Andrew's son, as Deputy Postmaster General of America. He served until 1721 when he was succeeded by John Lloyd of Charleston, South Carolina.

In 1730, Alexander Spotswood, a former lieutenant governor of Virginia, became Deputy Postmaster General for America. His most notable achievement probably was the appointment of Benjamin Franklin as postmaster of Philadelphia in 1737. Franklin was only 31 years old at the time, the struggling printer and publisher of The Pennsylvania Gazette. Later he would become one of the most popular men of his age.

Two other Virginians succeeded Spotswood: Head Lynch in 1739 and Elliot Benger in 1743. When Benger died in 1753, Franklin and William Hunter, postmaster of Williamsburg, Virginia, were appointed by the Crown as Joint Postmasters General for the colonies. Hunter died in 1761, and John Foxcroft of New York succeeded him, serving until the outbreak of the Revolution.

During his time as a Joint Postmaster General for the Crown, Franklin effected many important and lasting improvements in the colonial posts. He immediately began to reorganize the service, setting out on a long tour to inspect post offices in the North and others as far south as Virginia. New surveys were made, milestones were placed on principal roads, and new and shorter routes laid out. For the first time, post riders carried mail at night between Philadelphia and New York, with the travel time shortened by at least half.

In 1760, Franklin reported a surplus to the British Postmaster General--, a first for the postal service in North America. When Franklin left office, post roads operated from Maine to Florida and from New York to Canada, and mail between the colonies and the mother country operated on a regular schedule, with posted times. In addition, to regulate post offices and audit accounts, the position of surveyor was created in 1772; this is considered the presursor of today's Postal Inspection Service.

By 1774, however, the colonists viewed the royal post office with suspicion. Franklin was dismissed by the Crown for actions sympathetic to the cause of the colonies. Shortly after, William Goddard, a printer and newspaper publisher (whose

father had been postmaster of New London, Connecticut, under Franklin) set up a Constitutional Post for inter-colonial mail service. Colonies funded it by subscription, and net revenues were to be used to improve the postal service rather than to be paid back to the subscribers. By 1775, when the Continental Congress met at Philadelphia, Goddard's colonial post was flourishing, and 30 post offices operated between Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Williamsburg.

### CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

After the Boston riots in September 1774, the colonies began to separate from the mother country. A Continental Congress was organized at Philadelphia in May 1775 to establish an independent government. One of the first questions before the delegates was how to convey and deliver the mail.

Benjamin Franklin, newly returned from England, was appointed chairman of a Committee of Investigation to establish a postal system. The report of the Committee, providing for the appointment of a postmaster general for the 13 American colonies, was considered by the Continental Congress on July 25 & 26. On July 26, 1775, Franklin was appointed Postmaster General, the first appointed under the Continental Congress; the establishment of the organization that became the United States Postal Service nearly two centuries later traces back to this date. Richard Bach, Franklin's son-in-law, was named Comptroller, and William Goddard was appointed Surveyor.

Franklin served until November 7, 1776. America's present Postal Service descends in an unbroken line from the system he planned and placed in operation, and history rightfully accords him major credit for establishing the basis of the postal service that has performed magnificently for the American people.

Article IX of the Articles of Confederation, ratified in 1781, gave Congress "The sole and exclusive right and power...establishing and regulating post offices from one State to another...and exacting such postage on papers passing through the same as may be requisite to defray the expenses of the said office...." The first three Postmasters General--Benjamin Franklin, Richard Bache, and Ebenezer Hazard--were appointed by, and reported to, Congress. Postal laws and regulations were revised and codified in the Ordinance of October 18, 1782.

### THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

Following the adoption of the constitution in May 1789, the Act of September 22, 1789 (1 Stat. 70), temporarily established a post office and created the Office of the Postmaster General. On September 26, 1789, George Washington appointed Samuel Osgood of Massachusetts as the first Postmaster General under the constitution. At that time there were 75 post offices and about 2,000 miles of post roads, although as late as 1780 the postal staff consisted only of a Postmaster General, a Secretary/Comptroller, three surveyors, one Inspector of Dead Letters, and 26 post riders.

The Postal Service was temporarily continued by the Act of August 4, 1790 (1 Stat. 178) and the Act of March 3, 1791 (91 Stat. 218). The Act of February 20, 1792, made

detailed provisions for the Post Office. Subsequent legislation enlarged the duties of the Post Office, strengthened and unified its organization, and provided rules and regulations for its development.

Philadelphia was the seat of government and postal headquarters until 1800. When the Post Office moved to Washington, D.C., in that year, officials were able to carry all postal records, furniture, and supplies in two horse-drawn wagons.

In 1829, upon the invitation of President Andrew Jackson, William T. Barry of Kentucky became the first Postmaster General to sit as a member of the President's Cabinet. His predecessor, John McLean of Ohio, began referring to the Post Office, or General Post Office as it was sometimes called, as the Post Office Department, but it was not specifically established as an executive department by Congress until June 8, 1872 (17 Stat. 284-4).

Around this period, in 1830, an Office of Instructions and Mail Depredations was established as the investigative and inspection branch of the Post Office Department. The head of that office, P.S. Loughborough, is considered the first Chief Postal Inspector.

*(Information taken from USPS web site:  
<[www.usps.gov/history/his1\\_5.htm](http://www.usps.gov/history/his1_5.htm)> )*

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## RAPPAHANNOCK COLONIAL DANCERS

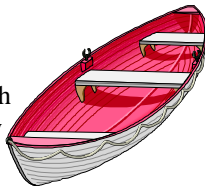


We have formed a Colonial Dance demonstration team. We have been asked by several people and organizations to "perform" for functions, so we have formed a group that will be able to meet those needs. We are looking for people who will be dedicated to coming to rehearsals, getting the proper attire together and be available when we have a commitment to do a demonstration. This will be a team striving to develop a level of expertise in this type of dance over time. For anyone who wants to be on the demo team, contact Elaine Sturgeon, coordinator 540-785-2168 or Diane Nolan 540-373-7651. Upcoming demonstrations are:

- Sept. 9 - Hospicetality - Mullins Farm, Rt. 3 West
- Sept. 10 - St. William of York Catholic Church Heritage Festival
- Oct. 7 - Historic Port Royal House Tour
- Oct. 21 - Kilmarnock Heritage Festival
- Nov. 16 - King George Historical Society

## BOAT COMMITTEE

After quite a long spell and much anticipation, the boat committee is finally active again. Al and a couple of other members have begun work on "our" boat. They have been doing some preliminary work and should be ready to start putting the hull on in September. This will be a long awaited dream for some of our group. They could always use more help. If you are interested in building a boat as it was done in Colonial times, contact the editor at 540-371-3906 and I will put you in touch with the appropriate person.



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## RCHS ACTIVITIES

In addition to the dancers, the group has several other activities lined up in the near future. Come join us for some fun:

- Sept. 16 - Friends of the Rappahannock Riverfest at Ferry Farm. Members will be assisting in activities there.
- Sept. 16 - Living Legacies in Fredericksburg. Some of our members will be taking part in these activities also
- Oct. 21 - Harvest Festival at Ferry Farm. Members will be assisting with activities.
- Nov. 4 - Historic Dumfries Tavern Night. Join in the fun.
- Nov. 18 - "Gentry" workshop at Gadsby's Tavern in Alexandria. Sponsored by the Living History Foundation.
- Dec. 2 - Annual Christmas Wreath Making. Time and Place TBA.
- Dec. - Dinner on the town in period attire....instead of our monthly meeting. More on this later.

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## MEETING RECAP

There was no July meeting due to the holiday. The August meeting was held on Tuesday August 1. Following our regular business meeting we had a wonderful program on the Environmental Living Center of the Claude Moore Farm by Dean Lewis. We learned a lot and hope to participate in their Colonial Skills Workshop in the spring.

It was announced at the meeting that the paperwork for our non-profit status has been sent in. We should know something in 4-6 weeks.

The Society has purchased a small wood table and 4 wood chairs to be used at events where we need to set up a table for information etc.

There are several exciting new events and items on the horizon for us. Come to the next meeting and see what's going on and how you can join in.

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## SUGAR'S ADVENTURES

*Written by John Hardia as dictated by Sugar the Parrott*

### SUGAR AND THE BOAT YARD



This is a beautiful morning and I am beautiful again. It took me almost half a year to replace my ruined feathers after my visit to the flour mill. Finally I am beautiful again. I hope I never see the miller again.

My Master had breakfast this morning and then got his hat and I knew he was going out. I jumped and jumped and rattled my sugar dish to make sure he wouldn't forget me. Oh good! He is opening my cage and letting me out. We walked down the street and the sun was out and already it was getting hot. What a great life! I love the heat! My Master always gets red and leaks when it gets hot. I wonder if something is wrong with him. For a minute we were heading for a flour mill and my heart almost stopped, but thank goodness we passed the mill.

We stopped at the boat yard where boats were being made. We came here before when our ferry disappeared during the flood and we had to buy a new ferry. Everybody stopped to visit me and after a while I went with a man who climbed down into a pit. It was pretty interesting and I enjoyed sitting on his shoulder until he started pulling on this thing and wood dust started pouring down on me. I really yelled and he stopped pulling on the thing and the wood dust stopped. He gave me to somebody else who was sitting on a bench scraping a piece of iron over a board making long thin curls of wood come off. He gave me a wood curl and I bit little pieces out of it and it was great. Then the man got up with the piece of wood and went to this great big board with a hole in it and he put his piece in the hole and hit it with a hammer until it filled up the hole.

I liked it better when he was making curls.

*(Sugar is a parrot living with his master, John,. John and Sugar reside on Water Street in 1790 Virginia. John is a 'factor', an import/export agent that arranges for purchases and sales between the newly independent colonies and England. He visits the waterfront docks daily.)*

## FIRST PERSON INSTRUCTION

The Bailey's have graciously volunteered to help those of us who are interested in becoming more comfortable with first person impressions. The first "practice session" will be Sunday, August 27 at 4 pm. Please let Susan know if you plan to attend (540-785-9451).

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## INTERESTING ARTICLE

The August issue of Seventeen Magazine had an article titled "Quantum Leap" in it that was interesting. It was about a teenage girl who dances at the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg. If you can't find the issue, Susan Bailey has the article for our RCHS scrapbook.

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## NEWSLETTER GUIDELINES

In order to produce a good newsletter, accurate and in a timely manner, please try to use these guidelines.

1. Our time period and location is 18th Century Virginia with our area of concentration Fredericksburg and the Rappahannock River Valley. The Rappahannock River Valley covers from the ford of the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers down to the Chesapeake Bay. Our particular interests lie in the areas of Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania, Stafford, King George, and Caroline counties.
2. Any member may, and **is encouraged to**, submit article(s) for publication. The newsletter is distributed to and read by people with varying degrees of expertise. Some of us are not as well versed on Colonial life and times as others, so in order to be as accurate as possible, please check your facts prior to submitting an article.
3. Sources/references must be given for factual information. This enables the reader to go to the original source for more information, gives credit to the source, and also lets the editor of the newsletter off the hook if the information is challenged. This includes information from the internet. If you write to someone for permission to reprint and receive it, I would appreciate a copy for my files.
4. Opinions of the writer must be clearly identified as such.
5. The newsletter is published every other month in January, March, May, July, September, and November. My target date to have the newsletter published is the 15th of those months. In order to do that I will need any submissions by the 8th of the month. you may mail to the PO Box, or email me at <[MyraWig@aol.com](mailto:MyraWig@aol.com)>.
6. The editor has the final say on content, format and deadlines. I try to keep the newsletter to 12 pages for postage. If I receive several articles and we also have a good bit of news to go into the newsletter, it may be necessary for me to edit, publish as a two part article or use it in the following month's publication.
7. If you have an idea for an article but don't have the time, resources, etc. to write it yourself, we have someone who is willing to do the research and write the article.

## NEW MEMBER WELCOME

We would like to welcome to new members. Bache Whitlock is back with us after an extended absence. It's good to have you back, Bache! Also, we welcome Alice Cromer. Both Bache and Alice live here in town.

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## FUTURE MEETINGS

September 5 - Al Piercey, Period Boat Building  
October 3 - Skip Nolan, Colonial Militia  
November 5 - Trip Wiggins, Flags of the Colonial Period  
December 5 - No Meeting, we will be getting together for an evening of fun and dinner. Place TBA.

The RCHS Newsletter is published bi-monthly in January, March, May, July, September, & November. All members receive a copy. Membership is \$10.00 per year for individuals, \$15.00 per year for families. **RCHS does not maintain an office.** All correspondence should be addressed to RCHS at P.O. Box 7823, Fredericksburg, VA 22404-7823. Items for the newsletter should be addressed to the Editor c/o RCHS or e-mailed to [MyraWig@aol.com](mailto:MyraWig@aol.com). Copyright 2000 RCHS. The content of the RCHS Newsletter is the property of RCHS, its members and contributors.